Minutes of the 7th Meeting of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of India held at New Delhi on 24 and 25 November 2008 at the Baha'i House, New Delhi

Members Present

1. Dr. A.K. Merchant
2. Dr. Sohayl Mohajer
3. Mr. P.K Premarajan
4. Ms. Nazneen Rowhani
5. Mr. Ganesh Shenoy
6. Mrs. Zena Sorabjee
7. Dr. Mangesh Teli
8. Mrs. Farida Vahedi
9. Dr. R.S. Yadav (absent with apologies on 25 November)

The meeting commenced with a round of prayers at 11.40 a.m.

Read and approved the minutes of the last meeting.

Next Meeting of the National Spiritual Assembly
9th, 10th, 11th January 2008 at New Delhi

169. Matters arising from the minutes

a. Item number 149: In the last paragraph, it is mentioned that "the final assessment should be with the participation of all concerned". It should be changed to: "The final assessment must be done with the participation of all concerned and in consultation with the Temple Committee".

b. Item number 151: It was decided later not to charge registration fee from participants in the three regional conferences. It was also decided to arrange for accommodation and local conveyance of participants. Also decided to reimburse the expenses incurred by the Councils in providing travelling allowances of those friends who genuinely need it for attending the Conferences. Resident members of the National Assembly and the Treasurer will prepare a draft budget of expenses for the Conferences and forward it to Counsellor Praveen Mallik for further consideration.

c. Item number 155: Regarding the membership on the Sikkim School Board, as recommended by Counsellor Baskaran, it was decided to replace Ms Devikala Lama with Mr. Raju Thapa.

d. Item number 159: It was decided to request Mrs. Nalina Jiwnani to attend the CSW in February March 2009. It was further decided to request BIC, New York to sponsor her trip.

Baha'i World Center

170. National Resource Person for JYSEP

Letter dated October 12, 2008 from OSED regarding the appointment of Ms Martha Merchant as the full-time serving resource person for promoting the junior youth spiritual empowerment programme in India.
Noted.

171. Convocation of 41 Conferences in the world to celebrate growth

Letter dated October 20, 2008 from the Baha'i World Center, announcing the convocation of a series of Regional Conferences, forty-one in number, to be held between November and March 2008-09.
Noted.

172. Three Regional Conferences in India

Letter dated October 21, 2008 from the Baha'i World Center, asking the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of India to serve as the host for the three regional conferences and making the necessary arrangements for them. These conferences are to be held in Bangalore, New Delhi and Kolkata.

These three conferences were befittingly celebrated by the Baha'i community of India and the reports are shared with the World Center.

173. Creation of a new website

Letter dated November 14, 2008 announcing that a website has been created to make available the reports of the Regional Conferences, based on the information received from participants.
Noted.

174. Message of the Universal House of Justice

Letter dated November 15, 2008 enclosing the message of the Universal House of Justice addressed to the friends who will be gathered at the three Regional Conferences in Bangalore, Kolkata and New Delhi.
Noted.

175. The imprisoned believers in Shiraz

Letter dated October 24, 2008 sharing information related to the arrest of fifty-three young Bahá'ís in Shiraz in May 2006.
Noted.

176. Unprecedented support to the believers in Iran

Letter dated November 9, 2008 conveying information about the unprecedented support by individuals and organizations extended to the believers in Iran in recent months and which has been accompanied by a corresponding intensification of efforts by the government, pushed by certain factions within the regime, to inflame the sentiments of the population against the Baha'is and thus exacerbate what is already a grave situation.
Noted.

177. Mr. Sean Bluett's case

Letter dated November 9, 2008 addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Australia regarding the deplorable attitude of Mr. Sean Bluett towards the National Spiritual Assembly and its advice in the matter.
Noted.

178. Mrs. Mehroo Rafaat's Will

Letter dated November 6, 2008 forwarding an email dated November 2008 from Mr. Sam Driver, a believer currently residing in the United States, who is concerned about the execution of the will of his mother, Mehroo Rafaat, which was left in care of the Local Spiritual Assembly of Pune.

Secretar

Decision:

The Secretary will respond to the House of Justice.

179. Letter to Mr. Sam Driver

Letter dated November 6, 2008 to Mr. Sam Driver informing him that his letter has been shared in confidence with the National Spiritual Assembly of India, which has been encouraged to look into the matter.

Noted.

180. Appointment of New Counsellors

Letter dated November 2, 2008, announcing the appointment of Mr. Chuungu Malitonga of Zambia to the membership of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Africa and Mrs. Zoraida Garro Garcia of Spain to the membership of the Continental Board of Counsellors in Europe, for the remainder of the present term.

Noted.

International

181. Resolution on the human rights situation in Iran

Letter dated November 21, 2008, informing the National Spiritual Assemblies that on November 21, 2008, the third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran, with a specific mention of the Baha'is in two operative paragraphs. The recorded vote was 70 in favour, 51 against, with 60 abstentions.

Noted.

The Continental Board of Counsellors

182. Counsellor Praveen Malik's letter regarding Assam

Email dated November 6, 2008 from Counsellor Praveen Malik, regarding the arrest of a Baha'i youth in Assam in connection with the recent political unrest there and requesting for any comments/suggestions on the report prepared by the Regional Baha'i Council.
The matter was noted.

National

183. Appointment of the Regional/State Baha'i Councils

The procedure followed by the National Spiritual Assembly this year for the election/appointment of the Councils was a comprehensive and thorough exercise and included sending out emails to the ABm's from the National Assembly (with copies to the respective Counsellors) asking for their suggestions of names of those individuals who would be suitable as Council members and also giving the appropriate weightage to the ballots received from the States. These two lists were then carefully considered by the National Assembly and it took the better part of both days of this meeting.
The final list of nine members was shared with Counsellors Baskaran, Eidelkhani, Lateef, Mallik and Seioshanseian who were invited to meet with the National Spiritual Assembly (24th November). After the joint consultation, a few changes were made and the final list of names (mentioned below) will be announced by the National Assembly on the Day of the Covenant.

Secretar

GUJARAT
(Total No. Ballots Received - 41)

Mr. Raju Ahire
Ms. Meenaben Bagul
Mr. Dharmesh Bhimsen
Mr. S.S. Chaddha
Mr. Prashant Chinubhai – Convenor
Mr. Sanjay Gain
Mr. Merwan Jadhav
Mr. Mahesh Lakhwani
Mr. Chetan Parikh

UTTAR PRADESH, DELHI & UTTRAKHAND
(Total No. Ballots Received – 32)

Mr. Pramod Maurya
Dr. Elham Mohajer - Convenor
Mr. Hamed Mohajer
Mr. J.P. Mishra
Mr. Prem Singh
Mr. Sumit Singh
Ms. Reena Srivastava
Mr. R.K. Tripathi
Mr. Shatrughan Verma

BIHAR & JHARKHAND
(Total No. Ballots Received – 74)

Mr. Balkeshwar
Mr. Dipendra Kumar Chandan
Mr. Rambahadur Dinkar
Mr. Ambrish Kashyap – Convenor and Secretary
Mr. Dharamvir Kumar
Mr. Chhote Lal Prasad
Mr. Shambhu Saran Sahani
Mr. Abhinandan Sharma
Mr. Swapan Singha

MAHARASHTRA & GOA
(Total No. Ballots Received - 61**)**

Mr. Zia Eshraghi
Ms. Tahirih Gaur - Convenor
Mrs. Parvaneh Javanmardi
Mr. Banamali Jena
Mr. Nand Khemani
Mr. Kailash Nevale
Mr. Tapan Patra
Mr. Fareidoon Taghavi
Mr. Sanjeev Vats

TAMIL NADU & PUDUCHERRY
(Total No. Ballots Received – 143; Invalid - 1**)**

Mr. Padmanaban
Mr. Ramesh Kannan
Ms. Kasturibai
Mr. Moomurthy
Mr. Nagarajan - Convenor

Mrs. Kala Palraj
Mr. Porselvam
Mr. Thirupati
Mr. S. Venkatesan

PUNJAB, HARYANA, HIMACHAL PRADESH, JAMMU & KASHMIR
(Total No. Ballots Received – 40)

Dr. Mona Agarwal
Mr. Gulshan Arora
Ms. Bhavna Chourasia - Convenor
Mr. Sandeep Gore
Mrs. Zohreh Roshan
Dr. Arun Sharma
Mr. Manish Sharma
Mr. Rajesh Verma
Mrs. Homa Zamani

KARNATAKA
(Total No. Ballots Received - 39**)**

Mrs. Izzat Ansari
Mr. H. N. Chandrashekhar.
Mr. Ravi Kiran – Convenor
Mr. Ajay Kumar
Mr. B. N. Lakshmi Narayan
Mrs. Parvathi
Mr. Balaji Rao
Mr. K. J. Shekar
Mrs. Amita Yaganagi

ASSAM, MEGHALAYA & ARUNACHAL
(Total No. Ballots Received - 30**)**

Ms. Mumpy Das
Mr. Bhaskarjyoti Deka
Mr. Pranjib Deka
Mr. M.K. Dewan - Convenor
Mr. Ibomcha Metei
Mr. Vipin Nanda
Ms. Sharda Nayak
Mr. Gautam Narzary
Dr. S. Panigrahi

MADHYA PRADESH & CHATTISHGARH
(Total No. Ballots Received – 110)

Mrs. Lalita Hatim Ali
Mr. O.P. Chaurasia
Mr. Yogesh Jadhav
Dr. Shirin Mahalati
Mr. Sameer Olyai
Mr. Sachin Patel - Convenor
Mr. Bhimsen Sahoo
Mrs. Neda Shoghi
Ms. Varsha Talwar

WEST BENGAL
[Total No. Ballots Received - 70 (postal 23)]

Ms. Nazia Alam
Mr. Pradip Bhattacharya
Mr. Bablu Ghosh
Mrs. Komal Ghosh
Mr. Kamran Hemmati – Convenor
Mr. Gourango Mahato
Mr. Manishankar Meiti
Mr. Dilip Sarawagi
Mrs. Bulbul Sarkar

TRIPURA
(Total No Ballots Receive -: 58 ballots)

Ms. Aparna Acharjee
Mr. Sashadhar (Akash) Chakraborty
Mr. Manish Deb
Mr. Jiben Debnath - Convenor
Mr. Bikas Dhar
Mr. Pankaj Dhar
Mr. Bibhuti Ranjan Karmakar
Mr. Bandhu Prasad Roy
Mr. Biswajeet Sinha

KERALA
[Total No. Ballots Received -100 (Postal 57)]

Mr. K. R. Babu
Mr. C. P. Balakrishnan
Adv. V. G. Biju
Mr. K. R. Joshi – Convenor

Mr. P. Gopinath Kurup
Adv. C. N. Ponnapan
Mr. K. Praneesh
Mr. M. Saravanan
Mrs. K. P. Sreemathy

ORISSA
(Total No. Ballots Received: 31)

Mr. Tooraj Moghbelpour - Convenor
Mr. Sushant Kumar Nayak
Mr. Riaz Motallebi
Mr. Samir Ranjan Swain
Mr. Arat Bandhu Swain
Mr. Sukant Rout
Mr. Kailash Padhi
Mr. Pramod Prusty
Mrs. Manaswini Nayak

ANDHRA PRADESH
[Total No. Ballots Received -33 (21 postal)]

Ms. Tahira Appa
Dr. Saifuddin Anis
Mrs. Kala Baskaran - Convenor
Mr. V. V. Bhargava
Mr. K. Chandrashekhar
Ms. Safa Fanaian
Mr. V. Devi Kumar
Mrs. Savitri Reddy
Mr. M. Srinivas Rao

SIKKIM AND DARJEELING
(Total No. Ballots Received – 100)

Mr. Kailash Sharma – Convenor
Ms. Punita Alley
Ms. Rupa Sharma Pradhan
Mr. H. M. Issa
Mr. Tika Pokhrel
Mr. Sandeep Biswakarma
Mrs. Devikala Lama
Ms. Sunita Thapa
Mrs. Hemkumari Pradhan

RAJASTHAN

(Total No. Ballots Received – 25)

Mr. Rameshwar Bairwa
Mr. Anand Gangwar
Mrs. Shaheen Haghighat - Chairman
Mr. Deepak Jagga - Treasurer
Mr. Arun Mathur – Convenor and Secretary
Mr. Rajesh Meena
Mr. Mukesh Mishra
Mr. Sohayl Rowhani
Mr. Sanjay Sharma

MANIPUR, MIZORAM AND NAGALAND
(Total No. Ballots Received – 33)

Mr. W. Rojit - Convenor
Mrs. K. Sanatombi Devi
Mr. Inaoton Singh
Ms. Sunita Thongram
Mr. T. Pradeep
Mr. Tiken
Mr. Sidananda Singh
Mr. Bobi Singh
Ms. N. Inao Devi

184. <u>Election of Delegates to the National Convention 2009</u>

The Secretary will prepare the letter for the election of delegates to the National Convention, share a copy with the other members of the National Assembly through email and then send the letter to the respective Regional and State Councils.

Secreta

185. <u>Updates from the Department of External Affairs</u>

a. <u>Baha'i Website</u>

Mrs. Farida Vahedi informed the National Assembly that the Baha'i website developed by the Department of External Affairs is being visited by an increasing number of people and many of them have expressed their desire to join the Faith. The names of these seekers are regularly shared with the concerned institutions. The task force on Internet Issues organized a one-day training in New Delhi on November 15 on blogging. The

training was conducted by Mr. Saate Issa. 15 friends attended this meeting. The task force is organizing another training session on November 25 in Mumbai. This programme will be conducted by Mr. Praveen Selvasekaran (he is a member of the task force on internet issues).

b. Office of Public Information

After consulting a few like-minded NGOs, the Office of Public Information had planned a number of activities to be held from November 14 to November 20, 2008. The purpose of these activities was to address the following three issues:

- Eradication of poverty
- Elimination of violence from society
- Impact of Environmental Degradation on Children.

On November 14, 2008, a seminar was organized in Lucknow in collaboration with the Department of External Affairs of U.P., Amity University, UNICEF and OXFAM on the Elimination of Childhood Poverty. More than 150 people from several NGOs participated in this seminar. The programme was very successful and Professor Amitabh Kundu from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, was the main speaker in the gathering.

Another seminar was organized on November 20, 2008 in the auditorium of the information Center of the Baha'i House of Worship. This seminar was held in collaboration with Childline NGO. A number of students from Jamia Millia Islamia attended. Professor Shanta Sinha, Chairperson, National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, was the Chief Guest. More than 70 friends participated in this seminar. The objective of both the seminars (in Lucknow and Delhi) was to initiate a discourse on the Eradication of Poverty on Human Rights Day.

c. Visiting people of prominence in Lucknow

During Mrs. Vahedi's visit to Lucknow, she took the assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi and visited fifteen people of prominence on November 12 and 13, 2008. Among those visited were Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, (the ex-Chief Minister of U.P), the private secretary of Ms

Mayawati and the Vice-Chancellor of Lucknow University who promised to organize a number of seminars

Regional/State Baha'i Councils

186. Legal Notice from Mr. Mahesh Kale to the Local Spiritual Assembly of Jind.

Mr. Mahesh Kale, a believer from Jind, wishes to withdraw his membership from the Baha'i Community of Jind and he had sent a legal notice saying he had been coerced into signing the declaration card.
The Secretary informed the Assembly that she is pursuing the matter with Mr. Rana Kumar, the legal advisor of the National Assembly.

Secreta

Other Decisions

187. Increment for Mr. Rana Kumar

Email dated October 26, 2008 from Ms Zia Modi suggesting that the retainership being paid to Mr. Rana Kumar be increased from Rs. 25,000/- to Rs. 40,000/-.
It was decided to raise the retainership fee of Mr. Rana to Rs. 35,000/-. This will be inclusive of his telephone bill.

Treasur

188. Dr. A.K. Merchant's Letter

Letter dated November 6, regarding the services of Dr. A.K. Merchant at the National Baha'i Office.
Noted. The modalities to be worked out later.

189. Mr. Erach Nooreyazdan's Letter

Letter dated November 12, 2008 from Mr. Erach Nooreyazdan regarding his voting rights.
Decision:
Since Mr. Nooreyezdan wanted at least an acknowledgement from the National Assembly that his letter has been received, the Secretary would do so

Secreta

190. Request for loan for the purchase of a car for Mr. Prabhakaran

Decision:
To explain to Mr. Prabhakaran that regretfully, as per the policies of the National Assembly, loans cannot be provided to staff who serve at National Office.

Treasur
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191. <u>Request for meeting with the National Assembly</u>

Email dated November 17, 2008 from ABm Dr. B.R. Panda regarding the difficulties that Council members from Nagaland face in attending the meetings of the Regional Baha'i Council of Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram held in Imphal and requesting the National Assembly to consider the possibility of not including Nagaland in the Regional Council. Dr Panda also requested for a meeting with the National Spiritual Assembly so that he can present certain other views and concerns.

Decision:
To invite Dr. B.R. Panda to the next meeting of the National Assembly that is to be held on December 13 and 14, 2008. In case it is difficult for him to attend the meeting in December, he can attend the meeting in January. Furthermore, to inform Dr. Panda that the matter regarding the Regional Baha'i Council of Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram has already been forwarded to the Universal House of Justice and we are awaiting their response.

Secreta
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192. <u>Mr. David's Case</u>

Decision:
To offer Mr. David, who was till now on daily wages as part of the cleaning and maintenance staff, a two-year contract of service at the National office.

Secretar
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193. <u>ISGP</u>

The National Spiritual Assembly felt that there should be more written communication between ISGP and the National Spiritual Assembly directly as there was lack of clarity about the relationship between these two institutions. The Secretary and Mrs. Vahedi were

Secretary
/
Secretary
for

requested to discuss this matter with Dr (Mrs.) Haleh Arbab Correa in Haifa later this month.

194. <u>Ms Lua Aminian's case</u>

Received an email from Baha'i Committee for China dated 19 November 2008 regarding the ongoing matter of the marital problems between Mrs. Lua and Mr. Navid Aminian.

Decision:

The contents were noted and it was decided to request the Baha'i Committee for China not to write directly to the Local Assemblies in India and also to ask the Local Assembly of Bangalore and the task force appointed by them to resolve this matter and not to directly communicate with BCC.

Secreta

195. Chief Justice's Conference in Lucknow

Since the function being organized by Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi in Lucknow would include people of international prominence in various judicial fields, it was decided that the Secretary for External Affairs would request Mr. Jagdish Gandhi to extend an official invitation to the National Spiritual Assembly to be present at the Conferences of Chief Justices being organized by City Montessori School, Lucknow from 12-14th December 2008.

Secretary for External

The meeting concluded at 6.45 p.m. with a prayer.

Chairman

Secretary